

From the OU

Shabbat of Unity



Our tradition teaches us that the most effective weapon in the arsenal of the Jewish people is our unity. Even the wicked King Ahab, an idol worshipper, met with success in his wars to defend our people in the merit of Jewish unity. We therefore join with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and others who are concerned with the welfare and safety of the State of Israel and its inhabitants in declaring this coming Shabbat, October 16-17, Parshat Noach, a Shabbat of Unity.

We urge our hundreds of constituent synagogues to recite appropriate prayers during this weekend. We ask them as well to enhance their observance of Shabbat; to intensify their Torah study; to increase acts of compassion and charity; and to reach out to other Jews with gestures of good fellowship.

We commend and admire the citizens of Israel for their courage and determination not to surrender to terror. We assure them that we stand with them at this moment and for the duration of their struggle for peace and justice.

We turn to the Almighty in the knowledge that mankind alone cannot achieve the peace which He prescribes without Heavenly Help, *seyata d'shmaya*. With hope and with tears we utter the time honored prayer, "may He who makes peace in His celestial realm make peace upon us and upon all of Israel, Amen."

Martin Nachimson, President

Allen Fagin, Executive Vice President

Parshat Noach: feeling our Brethren's pain; Saving Ourselves in a Time of Strict Justice

As you are well aware, This has been a rather disturbing week for the Jewish people. Our brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisroel have had their lives disrupted. Some of them have had their lives taken from them. For what purpose? To what end? The sons of Yishmael, are taking to the streets, knives in hand, assaulting innocent Holy Jews, men, women, children, the elderly, rabbis and lay people alike. Here in this country, our beloved LA Times headline reads 6 Palestinian youth killed without mention of the fact that they had knives in hand, hell bent on attacking and ruining the lives of Holy Jewish families.

I thought about trying to get a ticket to the Dodgers game on Thursday night. But you know it didn't feel right, and they lost. Great tragedy, right? Sure, admittedly it is frustrating, but it is just a game. Comparing it to the situation in Israel....

Harvey Tannenbaum is a former Angelino who lives in Ephrat. In the words of Rabbi Adlerstein... [Harvey Tannenbaum of Efrat not only gets the news out to us junkies faster than the wire services, he often has an angle or two on the human dimension that others miss. He sent this to his private list a short while ago.]

We put away our talit and tefilin in the morning minyan and waited for the last kaddish to be said by the 'baal tefila' who had yahrtzeit today for father, a Holocaust survivor, who also fought in three of Israel's wars before his death due to illness two years ago. I asked Moshe when was his nephew's yahrtzeit from last year's war in Gaza. David was 20 and died from his shrapnel wounds, in October, 2014.

"Yesterday was my nephew's yahrtzeit, one day before my father, his grandfather." I walked home to try and grab a quick breakfast, but had no time after Moshe's answers to remind us of who are our heroes in Eretz Yisrael. I had to take my daughter to Tel Aviv to get her Canadian passport renewed, although she's not going anywhere, and is a proud carrier of three passports by birth to her multinational parents, we decided to get the paperwork done for another 10years.

We began the drive after the 'tefilat haderech' which we say once we get onto the highways from Efrat to wherever in Israel. We have the option of wearing our antiquated bullet proof vests and many of us have the license to carry arms in our rock proofed windows of our cars.

We decided to take highway 443 to Tel Aviv. The highway was very empty and it took 45minutes to Tel Aviv without exceeding the speed limits. We approached the exit of 'La

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Guardia' named after that famous New York Mayor to head to the Canadian embassy. I was shocked that the parking area was empty and the coffee shops around this location were filled with 2 or 3 people instead of the usual 20 or 30 on a Friday morning at 830am.

We finished the adventures with the Canadians and as we got to our parked car, a soldier was standing nearby wearing his tefilin to catch a solo 'schacharit.' Only in Israel, near an embassy and an area of car repair shops and the sports arena across the street from us, would this occur. I waited until he finished his shmone esreh and asked him where is he from and where is he going for shabbat.

The soldier told me that he was going back to base but never misses a shacharit and tries to daven whenever he has 20 minutes. I asked him what yeshiva high school or hesder did he attend before the army? He looked at me and said he is not observant and only puts on tefilin daily. I looked for my windshield wiping sunglasses which were in the car. He stared at me and as he saw a teardrop being shed from my eyes, he asked me why am I sad? I answered that I was not 'sad' but 'proud' to meet a gibor yisrael like him, who had to daven on a street corner in this industrial/commercial/sports arena area of Tel Aviv. He asked me where do I live? I replied, 'Efrat', to which he explained to me that he was one of the hundreds of soldiers who were searching for Gil Ad, Naftali, and Eyal, z'l h'yd last June.

As most of you remember, our son was a classmate of Gil Ad and Naftali at Makor Chaim. How would I drive back to Jerusalem with my daughter after this encounter on the streets of Tel Aviv?

We began our drive to Jerusalem, but my daughter reminded me that 'eema' wanted us to stop and get some items from Hadar Geula, which is known to most if not all of you in Geula.

We parked in Meah Shearim as we thought we'd find the house of the latest terror victim from this week's (*first time ever) terror attack in Geula for a shiva call. We walked and

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were not able to find the apartment as we began our route by foot through Meah Shearim until Kikar Shabbat, the main 'intersection' of Geula.

I had to stop and ask my daughter is this Friday morning in Geula? The streets were empty, the bakery and fruit stores which are usually filled with locals, tourists, and the usual hundreds of American seminary girls and yeshiva boys, were 'filled' with 2 or 3 customers, and no lines!

We stopped by Gal Paz to look for a new disc and the owners were sitting behind the quiet counters saying tehilim. I have been here in this area for many years on Fridays and it's bustling and packed at this hour with the pre Shabbat shoppers, machers, and merchants.

The special 'tzadokes' who sits near the Hadar Geula store, who has her plate out for tzedaka, and is blind, has her mystical and ritual holiness on her face, where people ask her for a bracha for as many years as I can remember, was not seated outside the store today. We spoke to Moshe, the owner as we entered his empty Hadar Geula store, where is Chana? Chana has not come back to the sidewalk here since the pigua of a few days ago.

The 2minute wait to assemble and pay for the few items of takeout as my wife had requested was a 'record' in the years of the various Fridays that I can remember. Moshe thanked me for coming and told me to 'be careful' in Jerusalem and a safe journey back to Efrat, which he always called, "City of Kodesh"!

We crossed Kikar Shabbat heading back to Meah shearim, and lo and behold there were two Givati soldiers in full gear walking in patrol passed 'Feldheim' store, and heading to the narrow street of Meah Shearim. I watched the faces of the Meah Shearim regulars, some of whom in the past may have shouted out "ZIONI or even "NAZI" to these heroes. Today, they were quiet and I even heard a 'boker tov' from some of the Meah Shearim Toldos Aharon chassidim to the two Givati soldiers.

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As we approached our car, suddenly, two young girls (8 years old?), ran from the small alleyway of Meah Shearim near Breslov and 'bumped' into the soldiers. They were very scared and asked the soldiers to protect them. The girls in the very very modest dress code and the braided hair, looked up to the Givati soldier and said she thought she saw an Arab with a knife in her mixed Yiddish/Hebrew accent. I looked across the street and the City of Jerusalem street cleaner with his green vest looked up at the soldiers and the two little girls and with fear in his eyes, called out and identified himself.

His 'knife' was only the shovel that he uses to clean up the not so clean Meah Shearim. The soldiers smiled and knelt down to look at the girls and tell them in Hebrew, **"Hashem Yishmor Aleichen, v'anachnu naazor lo."** [**Hashem, will guard you, and we will help Him.**"].

We sat in our car and I was frozen and soaked from the eyes. The windshield wiping sunglasses were not working fast enough this morning.

We pray for our government to observe the mitzvah of the destruction of 'Amalek' 24/7 here.

It's time for all of you to come home, visit, or move here.....

They will not win over us

The truth is that this sort of intifada can easily make its way to the streets of Los Angeles. In fact, yesterday, a Jewish man was knifed in Williamsburg.

A Hasidic man was assaulted in Williamsburg on Friday morning, and the NYPD is investigating it as a bias attack.

Sources tell YWN that the NYPD and Williamsburg Shomrim (WSPU) received a call for a man assaulted at around 11:30AM, at Harrison Avenue and Gerry Street.

Responding units found a 35-year-old man with a head injury, and requested Hatzolah to respond. He was subsequently treated on the scene by Hatzolah, and transported to LICH Hospital where he is being treated for lacerations to his head.

Police Officers from the 90th Precinct have requested the NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force which is currently investigating the attack.

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Footage from security cameras is being reviewed.

The suspect is reportedly a dark skinned male, wearing a grey sweatshirt with a backpack.

Our sources add that the victim is a teacher at a nearby yeshiva, and was returning home from school when he was attacked.

How is this connected to our parsha¹?

The Gemara in Maseches Sanhedrin (108b) describes the great hardship Noach suffered in the ark ensuring that all the animals were properly fed. He had to feed during the day the animals which normally ate by day, and to feed during the night those animals which ate at night. The Gemara mentions in this context that there was a certain species of bird, the *orshina – chol* in Hebrew – which waited calmly without asking for food. When Noach asked the *orshina* why it did not want food, it replied, אצערך לא אמינא, טרידא דהות הזיתך – “I saw you were burdened, so I figured I would not bother you.” Noach blessed the *orshina* that it would never die, and indeed the verse says in Iyov (29:18), ימים ארבה כחול...ואמר, – “I said...I would live long like the *chol*.” This bird earned eternal life in reward for its decision not to bother Noach by asking for food.

The Greatest Segula [positive omen] for Long Life We live in a time when many people scramble for all kinds of segulos, and even pay large sums of money to charlatans claiming to have mystical powers. But the Gemara here teaches us a tried and tested segula for long life – sensitivity to one's fellow's plight, and feeling his pain. If a person shares in his fellow's pain, even if he is unable to provide actual assistance, nevertheless, as long as he genuinely feels his person's sorrow and does whatever he can to alleviate his distress, he earns longevity. A simple way to test oneself to determine if he possesses this quality is to check his reaction when he reads a notice requesting tefilos on behalf of an ill patient. Behind every such notice is an entire family in distress, worried about their loved one. We must all ask ourselves, how often after seeing such a notice do we write down the patient's name in order to pray for him? How often do we truly feel the pain of our fellow Jew? The family is not asking for any money or physical exertion, but only tefilos. How is it possible to just calmly read the notice without experiencing sincere, internal turmoil, without feeling the pain and distress of our fellow?

The Rebbe of Parmishlan famously said that he learned true ישראל אהבת [love for his fellow Jews] from a certain non-Jewish drunkard. The drunkard went over to his friend and asked if he loved him, and his friend replied that he certainly did. “If so,” the drunkard said, “then tell me what hurts me now.” “I don't know what hurts you,” his friend said. “Then you don't really love me,” the drunkard replied. This, the Rebbe said, is how we must love our fellow Jew – to the point where we feel his pain as if it were our own. Let us all work to truly feel the pain of our fellow Jew and achieve this great segula for long life.

But you know, this may not be enough... For when there G-d's attribute of strict Justice is active in the world, we may not be saved. What can we do to be protected?

Mercy brings Mercy

The Tiferes Shlomo offers a fascinating insight into Hashem's commandment to Noach to bring the animals with him into the Ark. The possuk says, (ו, יג) "ויאמר אלקים לנח קח כל בשר בא לפני כי (ו, יג), Hashem told Noach, 'The end of all life has come before me, because the world has become filled with thievery. I am about to destroy them from the Earth.'" Rashi comments, based on the Gemarah (סנהדרין קח), "כי מלאה הארץ חמס - לא", "because the world has become filled with thievery- their sentence was sealed only due to theft." The Tiferes Shlomo asks why theft was the determining factor in their punishment, when they had also transgressed many much more serious offences, such as murder and immorality?

He answers, quoting a Midrash that recounts that Avraham Avinu asked Shem ben Noach how they merited to survive the dangers of the flood and the Divine retribution. Shem's response was, "I don't know anything, aside from the fact that we had mercy on the birds and the animals. All the days of the flood we were busy providing each one with its needs, day and night. It was in that merit that Hashem had mercy on us." The Tiferes Shlomo explains that by acting mercifully with the animals in the Ark, Noach and his children inspired Hashem to act mercifully with them as well. The power of the middah of רחמנות, mercy, is so great that it can provide a person divine protection even during times of great danger when other merits would not be sufficient.

With this, he explains the statement of Chazal that it was thievery that sealed the fate of the דור המבול. There is no question that it was the more serious sins that brought about the decree of their destruction, but it was their thievery, which was symbolic of their cruelty and lack of caring that precluded Hashem from having mercy on them, thus bringing about their destruction. If they would have acted kindly and mercifully with one another then Hashem would also have had mercy on them.

Mesiras Nefesh

Chazal go into great detail describing the mesiras nefesh of Noach and his sons in taking care of the animals. The Gemarah (סנהדרין קח:) and the Midrash (תנחומא נח, ט) describe how they had to work day and night just to feed the many different species. The Gemarah says that Noach and his sons did not manage to sleep during the twelve months that they spent in the Ark, as there were some animals who needed to be fed during the day, and some at night. Noach was once late in feeding the lions and a lion bit him, rendering him a "בעל מום." This prevented him from being able to offer Korbanos after they left the Ark, and his son Shem had to offer them in his place. The Midrash (תנחומא שם) also tells us that after the year of grueling service in the Ark, Noach emerged from the Ark groaning and totally spent.

Noach was saved by the animals

According to the explanation of the Tiferes Shlomo an eye-opening point emerges. One might have thought that the animals were saved in the merit of Noach, but in actuality the opposite was true- Noach was saved by the animals. Chazal (בבא קמא ס.) tell us that at times when large scale Divine retribution is meted out in the world, the forces of destruction do not differentiate between the righteous and the wicked, as the possuk commanded Klal Yisrael in Mitzrayim (שמות יב, כב), "And You, no one should leave his house until the morning." If a person would have left his house at the time when the Egyptian first-borns were being struck down, he would have exposed himself to the powers of destruction that were carrying out the Divine decrees, and could have suffered the same fate as the Egyptians.

It was the great mercy and dedication that Noach and his sons showed for the animals that differentiated them from the other inhabitants of the world and granted them a special level of Divine protection which saved them from sharing the fate of the rest of their generation.

Hashem Remembered Noach

Hashem could have saved the animals in many ways, without Noach's assistance. He chose to involve Noach in order to give him the opportunity to save himself and his family by being merciful on the animals that were placed under his care. The possuk says, (בראשית ח, א) "ויזכר נח מה זכירה זכר", Hashem remembered Noach." The Midrash (בראשית רבא, לג, ג) asks, "מה זכירה זכר", what remembrance did He remember? That he [Noach] fed and took care of them [the animals] for all of the twelve months." This was the merit that saved Noach.

Similarly, Chazal tell us that through devoting oneself to performing acts of kindness, one can merit Divine protection, even in the most precarious situations, as it says in the Midrash, (ילקוט' ש, רבי יהודה בר חנן בשם רבי ברכיה אם ראית זכות אבות שמטה זכות אמהות רבי", (ישעיה תעז שנמוטטה לך הדבק בגמילות חסדים, הדא הוא דכתיב, (ישעיה נד, י) כי ההרים ימושו והגבעות תמוטטנה וחסדי מאתך לא ימוש, Rabi Yehuda Bar Channan said in the name of Rabi Berechiah, 'If you see that the merit of the Avos has collapsed, and the merit of the Imahos has crumbled, go and cling to acts of kindness, as the possuk says, 'when the mountains collapse and the hills crumble, my kindness will not leave you.'

Praised is He Who Considers the Poor

The mention of the fact that Noach took up residence next to the Ark revealed that Noach's **טון** was done with forethought and advance preparation. The possuk says, (תהילים מא, ב) "אשרי משכיל" "אשרי מי שקנה נפש ביום רעה ימלטנו ה' אמר רבי יונה, "אשרי נותן לדל" אין" (פאה ח, ח) "אשרי משכיל אל דל", הדא דמסתכל במצוה היאך לעשותה, Rabi Yonah said, the possuk does not say "praised is he who gives to the poor," rather "praised is he who considers the poor," referring to one who looks into the mitzvah in order to determine the proper way to fulfill it." Noach fulfilled this adage of Chazal by investing all of his efforts ahead of time in order to make sure that all possible issues would be resolved on time.

The Three Pillars that Support the World

The Baal Shem Tov explained that just as there was a physical Ark, so too there is a concept of a spiritual 'Ark' which can protect us from spiritual danger. It naturally follows that in addition to throwing oneself into his prayers and learning, one can also merit spiritual protection through total dedication to the middos of חסד and רחמים, kindness and mercy. This offers a new perspective into the words of Chazal (אבות א, ב) "על שלשה דברים העולם עומד, על התורה ועל גמילות חסדים ועל גמילות חסדים, on three pillars the world stands, on Torah, On Avodah, and on acts of Kindness."

In our times the floodwaters in the outside world that endanger our spirituality have reached such dangerous levels that we must do whatever we can to protect ourselves, whether it is by enveloping ourselves in the protective shield of the words of Tefilah and Torah, or by investing all our abilities in acts of kindness and mercy.

We Conclude with Avraham

The Gemarah (פסחים קיז:) says that even though we mention all three Avos in the first berachah of Shmoneh Esreh, in the conclusion we mention only Avraham Avinu. The Kotzker (אהל תורה, לך לך) explained that each one of the Avos represents one of the pillars on which the world stands. Avraham represents Chesed, Yitzchak represents Avodah, and Yaakov represents Torah. He explained that the Gemarah's statement that we conclude with Avraham is symbolic of the fact that in the last generations before Moshiach comes, the levels of Torah and Tefilah will diminish substantially. It will be in the merit of the last pillar, גמילות חסדים, that Klal Yisrael will be redeemed from exile, as the possuk says, (ישעיה א, כז) "ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה בצדקה" Zion will be redeemed with Justice, and its captives with charity."

Through dedicating ourselves to performing acts of kindness and mercy, and thoughtfully considering how we can help our fellow Jews in the most meaningful ways, may we merit that Hashem bring our redemption speedily, *amen, KY"R*.

And if we share in the pain of others, then HKB"Y will grant us the privilege of sharing in their joy and celebration, and in the joy and celebration of the arrival of Mashiach Tzidkeinu, אמן
בימינו במהרה.

ⁱ The thoughts on the parsha come courtesy of the Tolener Rebbe, translated by David Silverberg.